Ph. D. in Inter-American Literature  
in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
Proposal  
(amended and revised for the third time 4/15/07 per the  
recommendations of the Committee on Graduate Education, the CGE)

The Purpose and Justification:

The Department of Spanish and Portuguese strongly supports the creation of the new Ph.D. track in Inter-American Literature. The Department realizes that Inter-American literary study is rapidly becoming a very large part of the future for departments of Spanish and Portuguese across the country that such a development is the natural outcome of current trends, especially at Vanderbilt. We have created the Center for the Americas, the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies just became a National Research Center, and Vanderbilt continues to build on established academic strengths in the areas related to Inter-American studies. Vanderbilt should take the next step and lead the way. We are in an exceptional position al to succeed with this venture (and supply trained Ph.D.s to departments seeking assistant professors in "comparative American literatures"). We already possess the requisite faculty, the linguistic competency that is essential, and, above all, the experience (we have several faculty who are already exploring and cultivating this field). If we do not pursue this ground breaking Ph.D. track, we will miss an opportunity to become the discipline's model department, the undisputed leader in the field.

The new track is designed (1) To accommodate changes taking place in our discipline right now; (2) to establish ourselves as the preeminent program with respect to the involvement of Spanish and Portuguese in the development of inter-American literary studies as a new field (and later, if we are successful, in the possible development of comparative Iberian studies as well); and (3) to enhance our reputation here at Vanderbilt (and nationally) as an innovative and dynamic department.

This Inter-American Ph.D. is an advantage over an alternative option, a regular Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese plus a master's in English for various reasons. The current proposal does not require a linkage with the Department of English. We have avoided this requirement because, in our view, the third component of the Ph.D. track in Inter-American literature should be open to other related and interested units. These units include not only English but also French, Latin American Studies, and possibly even History.

In addition, true professional expertise in the theory and practice of Inter-American literature—which is the goal of the current proposed Inter-American Ph.D. track— is not a function of simply grouping together disparate credits and degree programs. Rather, serious, professional training in this complex area is a function of a carefully integrated doctoral program, one based on strategically selected course work done in at least three of the New World's principal languages and organized around a connecting theme, genre, period or movement or involving an issue of influence and reception, theory, or translation. Demonstrable internal coherence is thus the decisive factor in a first-rate doctoral program in Inter-American literature, and we believe that this end is best served by creating a separate doctoral track, one with specific requirements and expectations, such as we have proposed here.
If we adopt this approach, the training our doctoral students receive will become the new field's standard of excellence, the structural model against which other Inter-American literature programs will have to measure themselves. The goal of the Spanish and Portuguese department in proposing this new Ph.D. track is not merely to become a participant in the development of this field, but to become the recognized leader in it.

Funding:
This initiative will be funded entirely by the department of Spanish and Portuguese; no additional funding by any other program or department is needed.

The Goal:
To create a new Ph.D. track that would allow our doctoral students to prepare themselves as teachers and scholars of inter-American language and literature. Core to this new track within the Department of Spanish Portuguese is the development of both comparative linguistics and comparative literary studies.

Preliminary information obtained from English department chairs suggests that departments of English and American literature would consider a Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese to be a viable job candidate if this person were to have met the following requirements: true native fluency, at least 18 coherently focused graduate credits in English/American literature (we are requiring 21 credit hours), and experience teaching English composition courses at least one or two times in the course of their studies. Though funding would come from the graduate lines in Spanish and Portuguese, a student in this track would be allowed to teach English composition once or twice during his or her residence on campus.

Course taken would be offered by a wide range of faculty members. All the courses related to American (or “New World”) literatures (including those belonging to our native American traditions) or the literature of Anglo-phone Canada would be eligible for credit. Examples include (but are not limited to) English 320 (Studies in American Literature), 321 (Studies in Southern Literature), 325 (Studies in Modern British and American Literature), 326 (Introduction to Literary Modernism), 337a&b (Introduction to Literary Theory), and 355 (Special topics in English and American literature). Other possibilities would include courses in Québécois literature or in Franco-phone Caribbean literature should these courses be developed.

We keep open the possibility of giving credit for courses taken in our distinguished Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies. We would particularly favor courses closely tied to literary studies such as those in cultural anthropology.

By requiring at least 30 credits in Spanish (and at least 21 in Portuguese), we wish to ensure that our Ph.D. students are also able to compete successfully in the Spanish/Portuguese job market. Thus, the goal of this new Ph.D. track would be to make our students exceedingly competitive, able to participate in at least two job markets (English/American literature and Spanish Portuguese) simultaneously.
Although other programs dealing with this emergent new field are taking shape (the Michigan State program in “The Literatures of the Americas,” for example), the doctoral program we envision for Vanderbilt is by far the most demanding, the most comprehensive, and the most linguistically rigorous. It is our expectation, therefore, that the Ph.D. track in inter-American literature that we are proposing here will immediately establish itself as the prototype for this new type of literary study, the model against which other programs will need to measure themselves.

It is also our belief that to establish a Ph.D. track in inter-American Literature at Vanderbilt, with these requirements, represents precisely the kind of bold step forward that J. Hillis Miller has in mind when he writes about our need in the humanities to develop “new regional, transnational, multilingual, multiethnic programs (e.g., literatures of the Americas)” if we wish literary studies to continue to flourish as a serious intellectual endeavor in the twenty-first century (PMLA, vol. 115, num. 7, December 2000: 2062). Paul Jay makes a similar point when he notes that a new model is emerging in American studies, one in which “a broad critique of the narrow, nationalist conflation of the American and the United States has sparked vigorous efforts to re-situate the study of United States literature and culture in a hemispheric or pan-American context” (PMLA, vol. 116, num. 1, January 2001: 45). With this very demanding doctoral track in inter-American literature, we therefore intend to make Vanderbilt University the acknowledged leader in this rapidly emerging new field, a field that has already garnered support by the administration in the form of the Center for the Americas.

Requirements (a minimum of 72 credits; i.e. four years of course work):

I. Spanish: at least 30 credits

II. Portuguese: at least 21 credits

III. 21 credits in one of a number of related fields such as English (American Literature), French (Canadian and Caribbean), Latin American Studies (cultural anthropology), etc.

We are convinced that the Inter-American literature Ph.D. can realistically be completed within a period of six years. It would involve four years of closely supervised and coordinated course work followed by the presentation of a very detailed dissertation proposal, one that (arrived at in close consultation with the student’s primary academic advisor and doctoral committee) elaborates the thesis to be advanced, that assesses the pertinent bibliography, that indicates the specific authors and texts to be discussed, and that outlines the argument to be made in each chapter of the dissertation. Indeed, to facilitate preparation of the proposal and completion of the degree within six years, a certain number of directed study courses on the topic of the future dissertation might be taken during the last year of course work. After the proposal has been accepted, the student will take his/her exams. Working closely with her or his doctoral committee, the student would then have basically two years to prepare for writing the thesis and the actual writing itself.
We currently envision this proposal as an experiment that we will review after 6 years (6 years being an estimate of how long it will take us to produce our first Ph.D. in this area and to see how this person does in the job market) to see if we wish to continue with it or not. Since we will have to use our own funding lines to do this, we recommend that earmarking from one to three of our current lines for this new Ph.D. track. Our department would, thus, control this new Ph.D. track, its conception, its funding, and its administration, ensuring its intellectual and professional integrity.

No new courses would have to be developed, nor would any existing courses have to be modified to accommodate this new Ph.D. track. Courses would be selected on the basis of their pertinence to the student's primary interests, which would be an issue to be determined by the student and the student's doctoral committee.

The Ph.D. in Inter-American Literature

Admission Requirements:

Basic requirement: Candidates to the program may hold either a BA or an M.A. but all should be prepared to: 1) earn an M.A. in Spanish and/or an M.A. in Portuguese at Vanderbilt University; 2) demonstrate oral and written proficiency in either Spanish or Portuguese (or both), and in an additional language (English or French, for example, or any other language deemed appropriate by the student's doctoral committee). (In other words, a student who comes in with an M.A. in Spanish or who earns an M.A. must also earn an M.A. in Portuguese. A student who comes in with an M.A. in Portuguese or who earns an M.A. in Portuguese must also earn an M.A. in Spanish. These degrees are earned as part of the course of study, not in addition to it.) If Spanish is the primary language presented, then the student must be prepared to complete at least 21 graduate credits from the VU Portuguese program; if the primary language presented is Portuguese, then the student must be prepared to complete at least 30 graduate credits from the VU Spanish program.

General requirements: 1) official transcripts of all undergraduate study, 2) three faculty letters of recommendation, 3) a statement of purpose elaborating the applicant's professional objectives, 4) a writing sample in Spanish or Portuguese (preferably an academic paper), 5) GRE scores, 6) TOEFL score for international students who have not studied in an English speaking country.

Admission Committee:

A special admissions committee of three members will select and review the applications for this track. This committee will be comprised of a representative from the English Department (or from the French Department or another department, should a strong candidate from another field enter into consideration) and two from the Spanish and Portuguese Department, one of whom should be the DGS. A candidate must be approved for admission by both departments (e.g., both the Spanish and Portuguese and English Departments for a student planning to combine study of
Spanish and Portuguese and English or both the Spanish and Portuguese and French Departments for a student planning to combine study of Spanish and Portuguese and French).

Degree Requirements:

1. Student Standing: Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of B+ or better to remain in good standing. Students may request up to a maximum of two Incompletes (I) during their entire stay at Vanderbilt and cannot keep an Incomplete (I) for more than one semester. Students must show competency in classroom instruction and advance toward their degrees in a timely fashion. Students should actively participate in the departmental academic life and attend lectures presentations and other activities sponsored by the department and the Center for the Americas. Only students in good standing may present a dissertation proposal and take the doctoral exams. Good standing is a prerequisite for financial assistance, including summer support, Teaching Assistantships, and Dissertation Fellowships.

2. Languages: Proficiency in English, Spanish and Portuguese is required of all students enrolled in the Inter-American Literature Ph.D. program. Proficiency in French is required if French literature is the third area chosen.

3. Coursework: The Ph.D. requires 72 credits of course work (i.e., 24 courses) in three areas of specialization: 30 credits in Spanish (Spanish America) [primary area of specialization for all students entering this program], 21 credits in Portuguese (Brazil) [secondary area], and 21 credits [tertiary area] in one of the following areas:

   - French (Francophone Caribbean or Canada): 21 credits.

Required courses:
1. Spanish 301 (Literary Theory) or the equivalent in French or English.
2. Spanish 302 (Romance Philology)
3. Span/Port 351 (Comparative Methodology; offered alternate years).
4. Spanish 310 when the student begins to teach

Restrictions:
1. Transfer credit may not exceed 18 hours. In some special cases, upon previous recommendation by the DGS, the Faculty could approve the transfer of up to 6 more credits.
2. Transfer students will take a partial or complete M.A. exam depending on the type of exam taken at their previous institution and their academic preparation. Students entering with an MA in English will still need to take the MA exam in Spanish and/or Portuguese.

3. All 200 and 300-level Brazilian literature courses in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese that are eligible for Graduate credit may be counted towards the Portuguese component of the Ph.D.
4. All 200 and 300-level French literature (Canada and the Caribbean) courses in the Department of French and Italian that are eligible for Graduate credit may be counted towards the French component of the Ph.D. (if this track is selected).

5. All graduate level courses in English will be accepted. (Note: Currently the Graduate Catalog lists no 200-level courses for graduate credit in English.)

6. With the specific approval of the student's advisor, 200 and 300-level Latin American Studies courses that are eligible for Graduate credit may be taken supplement and enhance literary studies.

6. Time limitations:
   a) The qualifying examination must be taken between the seventh and ninth semesters after entering the program.
   b) The dissertation must be completed within four years after a student has been admitted to candidacy for the degree (completion of qualifying exams).
   (To achieve the goal of keeping to this timeframe, it is expected that the incoming student will be awarded one or two years of service-free support.)

4. Reading Lists and Ph.D. Exam Preparation:

1. The Period List consists of primary and secondary works in all genres from a particular period directly related to dissertation topic.

2. The Specialized Research List consists of works based upon the dissertation topic. The dissertation and resulting list can be organized around a genre, an issue, a theme, or any combination of these elements, as well as around a particular theoretical problem. The list should include primary works as well as theoretical, historical, and critical works with a hemispheric Inter-American perspective. A two-page statement of the thesis of the dissertation should accompany the Specialized Research List.

3. The reading lists must include texts (read in their original languages) from each of the literatures being presented for examination.

   The majority of the texts should reflect the student's primary and secondary areas of specialization (i.e. Spanish American literature and either Brazilian literature or another New World literature, including Native American literatures).

   A substantial number of texts from the student's tertiary area of specialization as well.

   If a fourth literature, area, or subject matter is involved, it too should be represented (as per the decision of the student and the student's doctoral committee).

4. Each list normally consists of approximately 45 to 65 books (as well as complementary chapters of books, articles, and specific works of literature, theory, and criticism). Each list should be compiled by the student in consultation with her/his advisor and committee. An
approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.

5. The final proposal for the dissertation and the bibliography, approved by the advisor, should be presented to the dissertation committee one month before the exam.

6. For creation of Ph.D. committees, schedule of reading lists and dissertation projects, and Ph.D. exams, see the Ph.D. timetable below.

7. The Ph.D. Committee will consist of three faculty members from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (primary area of specialization), one from the student's third area of specialization, and one outside member, chosen by the student in consultation with his or her advisor. The committee will have a single Chair, who will be a tenured faculty member from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (the committee chair will also serve as dissertation director unless the student wishes to have co-directors). The composition of the dissertation committee shall be the responsibility of the student (who, after securing the agreement and permission of all parties involved, must provide the DGS with a list of the faculty who will serve on the committee and indicate who will serve as committee chair) and should be established the semester prior to the Ph.D. exam.

5. Ph.D. Exam format:

1. The Written Exam will be organized by the student's academic advisor/director of the dissertation, will be agreed upon in advance by the entire committee, and will be divided into two parts based on the Period and Specialized Research lists and the Proposal. The student should answer 3 out of 4 questions from each part. The essay answers will be 10 to 15 pages long (double-spaced, New Times Roman, 11-12 point), and should demonstrate dedicated work, sophisticated thinking, and reflect the student's readiness to start work on the dissertation.

   The exams will be administered by the Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese.

   The questions should be a mixture of comparative questions and questions involving individual texts and authors. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the examining committee to make sure this mix of questions exists.

   The slate of questions for each part of the exam (Period and Proposal) must involve Spanish American literature, Brazilian literature, and the literature of the other area involved (e.g. that of the United States or Canada – both Francophone and Anglophone).

   If a fourth literature, area, or subject matter is involved (e.g. Native American literature, the literatures of Canada, or theory), the extent of its presence in the doctoral exam (and in the dissertation) will be determined by the student and the student's doctoral committee.

2. Oral Exam: the director of the dissertation will distribute copies of the exam to each member of the committee and the DGS. Five to fifteen days after a satisfactory completion of the written part the student will take an oral exam during which the student will present the dissertation
prospectus, discuss it with the committee and answers questions regarding his or her written exam. The main purpose of the oral exam is the conceptual and theoretical strengthening of the prospectus, the discussion of the material and content proposed, and the definition of both a plan and a timetable for the completion of the dissertation.

3. Possible outcomes:
   a) Pass with distinction and Candidacy for the Ph.D.
   b) Pass and Candidacy for the Ph.D.
   c) Fail. Depending on the nature of the failure, the student may be asked to repeat either part or all of the exam. If the exam shows that the student is unlikely to have success in the future, he or she may not be given the option of additional testing.

6. The dissertation

1. The director of the dissertation will chair the Ph.D. committee. There can be, however, two co-directors, one of whom may be from a VU administrative unit other than Spanish and Portuguese, if that arrangement will better serve the needs of the student.

2. The dissertation must, in substantial fashion, involve texts written in at least three languages pertinent to the New World experience (the dyadic model is not acceptable and will be avoided; two of the languages must be Spanish and Portuguese).

   More languages, literatures, and literary traditions and cultures may be represented as needed.

   Native American languages and literatures, both oral and written, may be included (if linguistic competence is verified and if appropriate training in both the language and literature can be obtained or demonstrated). If the Native American literature to be used is written in English, Spanish or other European Languages, then the literatures of at least two other New World languages must be substantially represented in the dissertation (again, the dyadic model is not acceptable for this Ph.D. track).

3. The Inter-American dissertation must be demonstrably comparative in nature and, in terms of the texts it discusses, should clearly reflect the student's primary, secondary, and tertiary areas of expertise.

Upon completion of all requirements for the Inter-American Literature Ph.D. track, the student will receive a Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese.

Timetable for Graduate Studies

Students entering the program with a B.A.

1st year
   Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits) including 301.
Spring: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits).

2nd year
Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits). Take Span/Port 351 (Comparative Methodology) by the end of the second year.
Spring: 3 classes (9 credits). Take first M.A. exam at end of semester.

3rd year
Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Select an academic advisor (future director of the dissertation). Take second M.A. exam (if necessary) at end of semester.
Spring: 3 classes (9 credits).

4th year
Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Create Ph.D. committee: a chair (from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese), 2 additional members from the same department, 1 or 2 members from the third area of specialization, (English, French, or Latin American Studies, for example) and 1 outside member.
Present to the Dissertation chair the first draft of the reading lists and the two-page statement of the thesis of the dissertation by week 8. An approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.
Apply for Dissertation Enhancement Award and other dissertation scholarships.

5th and 6th year: Dissertation.
Apply for Dissertation Enhancement Award and other dissertation scholarships.
Dissertation Defense and granting of Ph.D.

Students entering the program with one M.A. (In Spanish or Portuguese) or a Licenciatura (or equivalent degree) in a field that may allow transfer credits for the Inter-American Ph.D.
1st year
Fall: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits) including 301.
Spring: 3 or 4 classes (9 or 12 credits).
A decision about transfer credits (up to 18) will be made at the end of the year.

2nd year.
Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Take Span/Port 351 (Comparative Methodology) by the end of the second year.
Select an academic advisor (future director of the dissertation).
Spring: 3 classes (9 credits). Week 3: Take second M.A. exam.

3rd year
Fall: 3 classes (9 credits). Create Ph.D. committee: a chair, 2 members of the department and 1 outside member. * Present to the Dissertation chair the first draft of the reading lists and the two-page statement of the dissertation thesis by week 8. An approved first draft of the lists and the statement should be received by the DGS and distributed to the members of the dissertation committee at least four months before the expected date for the Ph.D. exam.


4th and 5th year: Dissertation.